

October 15, 2013

Testimony to the Michigan Health Policy Committee

Dear Representative Haines and members of the Health Policy Committee:

I am currently the Medication Safety Officer at a Mid-Michigan Healthcare System. Before working at the healthcare system I served as the Manager for the Center for Drug Information, Evaluation and Research at a Detroit healthcare system, and was a faculty member at a state university. My professional experience encompasses systems evaluation to improve safe medication use in hospitals and safe medication use by individual patients in the community.

Based on my professional experiences, I would like to offer two recommendations to the Committee:

- (1) Technology is prone to errors and must be implemented with appropriate checks and balances. Prescription drugs are dangerous products used under the supervision of a prescribing physician and the guidance of a pharmacist. Drug distribution systems are designed with safeguards to assure the right product is given to the right patient and that the product is not adulterated. Therefore implementing new technology in the process of delivering prescription drugs should be carefully evaluated and implemented. For example, Automated Medicine Cabinets (such as Pyxis or Omnicell) are used in hospitals to make pharmaceuticals readily available to nursing staff. Pharmacists are still required to verify medication orders before nurses can administer the medicine. There is still a system of checks and balances. Software problems still occur with these Automated Medicine Cabinets that are caught as near misses by nurses and pharmacists. Therefore, we cannot rely on technology alone to deliver medication to our patients.
- (2) Patients do not have problems with accessing prescription products. I have conducted focus groups and surveyed over 600 patients in the state of Michigan – including the U.P. Not one person commented about difficulty in obtaining prescription drugs. In fact many patients want personalized services for safe use of medications. Patients using medications for chronic health conditions and/or short term illnesses have questions about drug safety, necessity and affordability. Therefore, the benefits of implementing new technology should be carefully weighed against any potential safety risks.

Based on my experiences as a researcher, manager, and pharmacist, I do not support S.B. 373.

I am available to the Health Policy Committee if additional information is requested.

Sincerely,

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